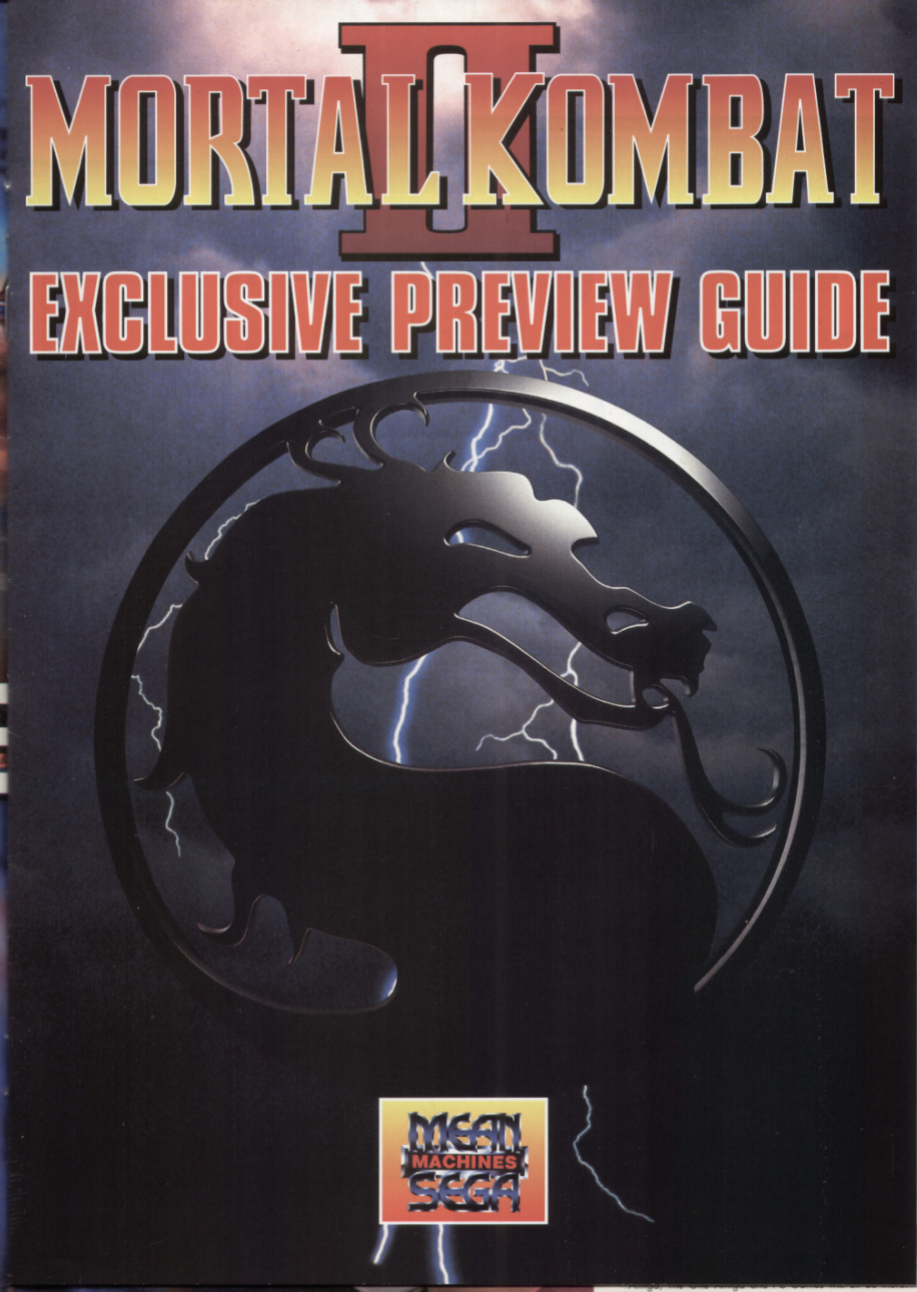
MORTAL KOMBAT II

EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW GUIDE



MEAN MACHINES SEGA

Not content with bringing you the first pics of Mortal Kombat II for the Megadrive, MEAN MACHINES SEGA is proud to present the first full preview of what is surely the hottest game of the year...

MORTAL II

It has been in development for eighteen months, and MEAN MACHINES SEGA has been there every step of the way. It is a conversion everyone has been waiting for — and one we know inside out. It is, of course, Acclaim's forthcoming conversion of Midway's Mortal Kombat II coin-op. Now, after showing you the first screenshots last issue, we go right behind the scenes of this eagerly-anticipated conversion. We've seen every character, Fatality, Babality and Friendship, and we've played it constantly. As such, we're more than capable of divulging the complete info on the Megadrive and Game Gear versions of Mortal Kombat II. But first: the scenario... Having failed to unleash chaos upon the Earth by seizing control of the yearly Shaolin tournament, Shang Tsung has returned from his humiliating defeat at Liu Kang's hands to the Outworld to face the wrath of his Dark Lord, Shao Kahn. Bargaining for his life, Tsung begs Kahn for forgiveness. Kahn grants him with a second chance, realising another tournament would be an opportune chance for his opponents to wipe each other out, Tsung, however, is aghast when Khan regenerates him into a younger form and forces him to enter, too. With fighters from Khan's Outworld sizing up against the surviving contenders from Earth, the tournament begins in a number of Kahn's Outworld lairs. The same rules apply, but this time the champion will end up going face-to-face with Kahn himself...

1-2 PLAYERS	
RELEASE	SEPTEMBER
BY	ACCLAIM
PRICE	TBA
GAME TYPE	BEAT' EM UP

PERCENT COMPLETE

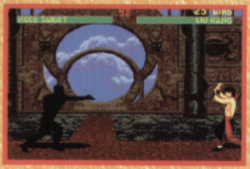
MK II

COIN-OP QUALITY?

The one thing everybody wants to know about the conversion is HAS IT GOT EVERYTHING FROM THE COIN-OP IN IT? Well, as near as dammit, yep. Probe have managed to cram every Fatality, Bability and Friendship into the game, and every fighter has retained their full complement of in-bout moves — including Kitana's fan lifts, Kung Lao's hat-related antics and the pit and spike fatalities. In terms of appearance, the animation and moves are virtually identical to that of the coin-op with just the odd frame lost along the way, and a few post-Fatality blood splats dropped due to the Megadrive's relatively humble sprite system. Similarly, Probe have taken the original samples used in the coin-op, and recreated them in full, along with the game's assorted in-game tunes.

SECRET FIGHTERS

Hidden away deep within Khan's coin-op domain lurk three secret fighters — all of whom have made it into the Megadrive version. Shady replicas of existing fighters, they masquerade under the names of Jade, Smoke (who lives up to his name), and Noob Sairot. The former pair have appeared in every version of the MK2 coin-op, whilst the latter was a new edition for V.3 versions of the cabinet.



FINISH HIM!

One of the reasons the original Mortal Kombat did so well for itself was because of the novelty of the death-dealing special moves.For this sequel, however, in addition to the assorted Fatalities each character has at their disposal, Midway also used the sequel to introduce two new ideas: Babalities and Friendships. Both are effected using a sequence

FATALITIES

As in the original, the victor walks towards their opponent and performs the Fatality moves. Depending on the proximity of the player to their opponent, the loser should then be dispatched in a suitably enjoyable way! Each character has two Fatality moves.

FRIENDSHIPS

'All's fair in love and war.' Rubbish. Despite the friendly overtone to this finishing move, it basically ends with the victor being nice to his opponent, and smugly offering them a token of friendship.

BABALITIES

Ever wanted to see Baraka in nappies? Hmmm, weird. Babalities are a nice humorous touch which see the loser reduced to infant form whilst the victor crows over their loss of years.

PIT FATALITIES

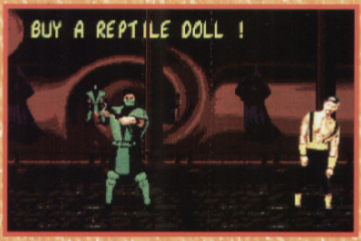
Only applicable within the pit level (funnily enough), the pit Fatalities work in one of two ways. The loser is either kocked into the green ooze in the backdrop, or they drop from the screen and drop into a 3D screen until they land in a broken mess at the bottom.

IN THE RED CORNER...

The coin-op's fighters have all survived the transition from the arcade to the Megadrive with no noticeable omissions. Midway's programming team put together a series of scenarios for each character, all of which tie in with the on-going theme of an Outworld invasion with keeps cropping up throughout the game. As such, whilst the likes of Liu Kang and Raiden fight for the forces of good, Shang Tsung is most definitely out to unleash chaos upon the Earth. Others, however, have more dubious motives...

REPTILE

Following his cameo appearances in the first game, Reptile has now been fleshed out into a full-fledged combatant. A mixture of everything good about Sub-Zero and Scorpion, he has a disgusting line in mucus snorting and a 'Power Ball' moves which starts of harmless enough, but knocks opponents for six.



▲ *Ouch, I bet that hurts...*

BARAKA

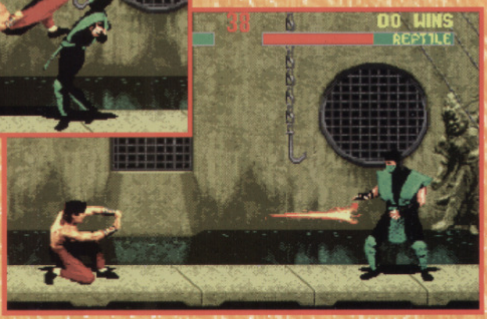
A resident of Shang Tsung's homeworld, Baraka is a member of a nomadic band of mutants constantly roaming the planet's wastelands. His reputation as an unpredictable fighter prone to devastating fits of anger didn't take long to reach Shao Kahn who promptly enlisted him in his demonic army. He is a master of knife-wielding and jumping moves and is an incredibly agile combatant.

▲ *That's one in the eye for Mileena — literally!*

LIU KANG

Another refugee from the first game, Kang proved himself to be the ultimate fighter in the first game and was responsible for defeating Shang Tsung in the final battle. Once again, he has been summoned to defeat the evil Outworlders — but has vowed to make it permanent this time...

▼ *If Reptile doesn't move, his outfit will include the latest in hotpants!*



▲ *Eat odour-Eater! Even Bobby Moore couldn't do a bicycle kick like this....*

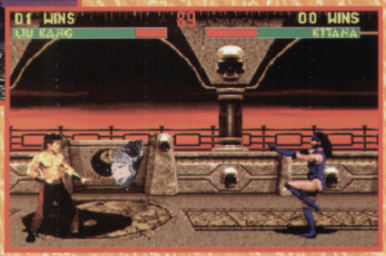
▲ *Liu Kang gets to grips with some of his in-game moves.*

KITANA

Shao Kahn's personal assassin has a background shrouded in mystery. Armed with razor-sharp fans she has perfected a series of multi-hit combination moves which can halve an opponent's energy almost immediately. Kahn's implicit trust of his beautiful assassin is now strained, though, as she was seen talking covertly to one of the Earth-based fighters.

◀ *Kitana's fan skills see her through for another bout.*

▼ *Liu Kang doesn't stand a chance as Kitana's fan spins towards him.*



◀ *The 'Fan Lift' in all its glory!*

▲ *I'm a big girl, look what I can do...*

SCORPION

Killed many years ago by Sub-Zero, Scorpion has returned from the grave having vowed to eradicate his frosty sworn enemy. His spectral form hasn't damaged his fighting prowess in any way, and once again he has bought his spear and teleporting skills into the arena. His breath's pretty bad, too...

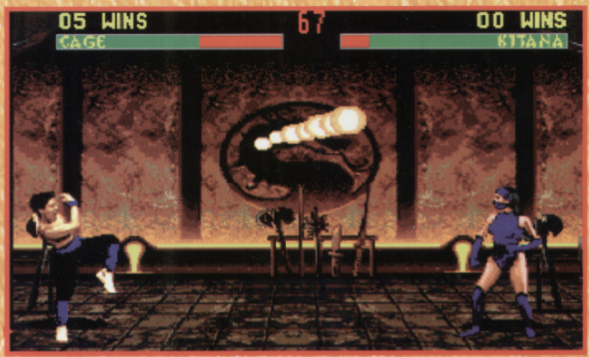
▲ *Scorpion uses his teleport move to escape Sub-Zero's icy powers.*

▲ *Get over here! Scorpion pulls Shang Tsung to his imminent doom.*

▲ *Ooh, that smarts! Our yellow-clad hero recoils from a punch to the goolies.*

JOHNNY CAGE

Star of silver screen, Johnny Cage, has returned with a wider range of moves and particularly impressive fatalities. His specialities allow him to trails a series of spectral duplicates whilst performing uppercuts and kicks, and these effectively double the power of said moves.



MILEENA

Sister and partner to Kitana and told by Shao Kahn to keep a close eye on her sibling for any signs of treachery. Armed with two Sai swords, she is also a strong kicker and known as something of a man-eater — literally! Rumour has it she, too, has found an ally among the twelve fighters and plans to overthrow Tsung.

▼ *In Kahn's temple, Mileena unleashes her double blade throw.*

▲ *The Living Forest looks on as Mileena celebrates her victory.*

SUB-ZERO

Master assassin, and ice lord extraordinaire. Sub-Zero entered the original tournament with the intention of killing Tsung. His prowess saw him recruited for the second battle, but a rumour has reached Kahn's ears that he is next on Sub-Zero's hit list.

▼ *Jax leaps over one of Sub-Zero's freezing ice bolts.*

▼ *Sub-Zero can now freeze the ground, sending his opponent's slipping towards him.*

▲ *Got him! A frozen foe awaits a good uppercut!*

RAIDEN

The god of thunder entered the tournament after learning of Shao Khan's plan to throw the Earth into chaos. Having survived the events of the first game, he has returned with his lightning and teleport capabilities, but now boasts two of the game's most impressive and gruesome Fatalities.

▲ *Shock therapy — Raiden style!*

Returning from the first game is Raiden's dive move.

JAX

A one-time wrestler, Jackson Briggs — AKA Jax — is the most powerful fighter of the lot. His powerful frame ensures he has the strongest punch of the tournament and it is believed he can rock the foundations of any building simply by punching the floor! His reasons for entering the tournament are believed to be simple vanity.

◀ *Jax's Ground Pound costs the opponent valuable energy if they aren't jumping.*

▼ *Reptile cops a close look at Jax's energy throw.*

KUNG LAO

Having left the Shaolin faith, Kung Lao is wise to Khan's plans to upset the balance between good and evil. As such, he has taken it upon himself to enter the tournament and ensure normality prevails. His mission is also one of revenge, as 500 years ago Tsung's right-hand man, Goro, killed the Lao family champion. His Mexican-style headgear is 'brim-ming' with special moves...

SHANG TSUNG

In disgrace and desperate to reinstate himself as Khan's right-hand man, Shang Tsung has every-thing to prove. Khan has forced him to enter the tournament, but has regenerated him into a younger form. Tsung is by far the most adaptable fighter, as his morphing skills allow him to change his form into any of the other fighters.

▲ *Tsung is a master of disguise and is seen here morphing into a replica of Kitana.*

◀ *Tsung's Skull Bolt move allows him to fire two or three projectiles at a time.*

MORTAL KOMBAT II

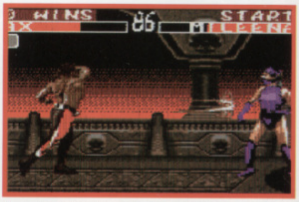
Yep, Probe and Acclaim have even managed to get MK2 on to the relatively humble Game Gear! Weighing in at a hefty 4MEG, Game Gear Mortal Kombat II contains eight of the coin-op's fighters, and pits them against each other against two backdrops. Obviously, the little handheld was never going to cope with the coin-op's many Fatalities and the like, but Probe have still managed to ensure that each of the characters has at least one death move.

The main complaints Acclaim received about the first game on the Game Gear was that it was a tad slow. This time, Probe have managed to keep the game as close as possible in terms of animation, AND ensured the fights rip along at a fair old whack. In addition, the coin-op's attract mode and 'Mountain Of Warriors' has survived the transition.

▲ *Games action ahoy in this action packed screen shot*

▲ *A rolling throw from Sub-Zero.*

▲ *Shadow — one of the hidden foes.*



▲ *Jax lets fly with another energy throw.*

▲ *Stopped in his tracks, Liu Kang is easy pickings.*

◀ *Jax demonstrates his trusty face pummel.*

THE EIGHT ESCAPE

Eight of the coin-op's twelve fighters have made it to the Game Gear version. Liu Kang, Sub-Zero, Scorpion, Kitana, Reptile, Shang Tsung, Mileena and Jax have all been reproduced as closely as possible, with most of the character's special moves incorporated — so fans of Reptile's spit-spitting habits need not be disappointed. Similarly, Probe have managed to ensure that each of the characters also has a Fatality. However, the rest of the game is rather gloriously bloodless — apart from a few splats here and there — due to its PG rating.

▼ As the BBC say: another chance to see — this time it's Scorpion's spear move.

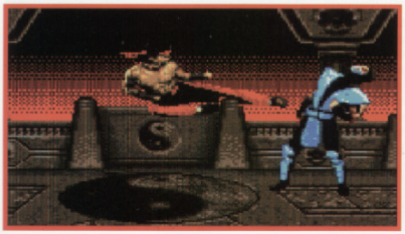
▲ Ducking won't get you out of it, Reptile, old bean.

HIDE AND SEEK

Despite strict memory limitations, the Game Gear conversion of MK2 also includes the coin-op's hidden fighters! Whenever a set routine is followed, the player receives a message informing them of a new, mysterious foe. The backdrop then changes from the customary palace or living forest stage and a new brick wall setting is revealed. This acts as the lair of the hidden combatants, who resemble a couple of the existing fighters.

▼ The dangers of eating to many tins of peas shown in full.

▲ A variety of special moves for your delectation and delight.



FINISH THEM!

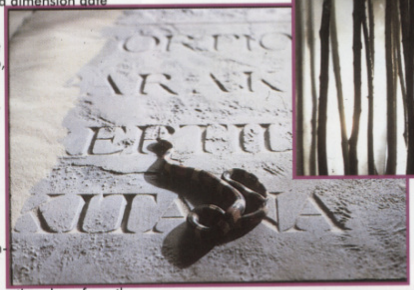
In addition to the existing tournament mode where the player battles their way towards Shao Khun, a second player can also join in the fun. With two Game Gears linked together, Probe have made provision for a head-to-head mode with the two combatants selecting their fighters from their respective screens.

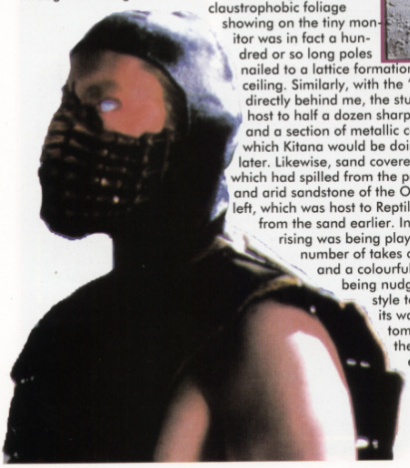
THROUGH THE KEYHOLE

INSIDE S PALACE..

Not many people get to wander into the world of Mortal Kombat II and live. Steve Merrett did, though, as he ventured into Shepperton's newly-created Outworld to take a look behind the scenes of Acclaim's forthcoming Mortal II TV advert...

I've ventured into Shao Khan's Outworld domain, you know. And I've run through the living forest, shaken hands with Kitana (and lived) and been given the thumbs up by Reptile. I've even had a go with Kitana's blade fan. No, really I have. However, rather than follow the route through a dimension gate used by Mileena, Johnny Cage and Co., I got there by taking the train to Walton-On-Thames (the last place you'd expect an evil deity to live), and took a cab the rest of the way. And, to tell you the truth, as God domains go, it was a little disappointing — and my Mum would have had a fit at the dust everywhere. Actually, I'm stretching the truth a little. I did go to Walton-On-Thames, but only to view the filming of Acclaim's new Mortal Kombat II TV ad, set on a reconstruction of Khan's Outworld den... Shepperton's Studio S was the temporary location for Outworld and the other two stages Acclaim are using in the ad. As I sat in one of the rickety Director's chairs watching rough footage of Scorpion somersaulting through the living forest it was hard to imagine that the claustrophobic foliage showing on the tiny monitor was in fact a hundred or so long poles nailed to a lattice formation slung from the ceiling. Similarly, with the 'living forest' directly behind me, the studio also played host to half a dozen sharp-edged statues and a section of metallic corridor within which Kitana would be doing her stuff in later. Likewise, sand covered the floor which had spilled from the painted backdrop and arid sandstone of the Outworld to my left, which was host to Reptile's emergence from the sand earlier. In fact, Reptile's rising was being played through in a number of takes on the monitor, and a colourful snake was being nudged Black Adder-style to make it writhe its way across a tombstone bearing the assorted fighters' names.



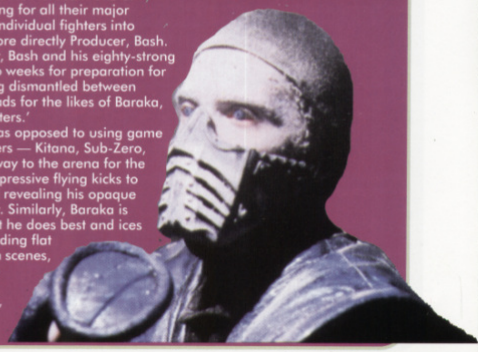


SHAO KHAN'S ...

KAHN AND GET IT

Following the success of the original Mortal Kombat ad and the NBA Jam one of a few months ago, Acclaim are now proposing TV advertising for all their major titles. The job of transferring Shao Kahn's cronies and the individual fighters into real life fell to Acclaim's American ad agency, RDA, and more directly Producer, Bash. With very little reference material available for each fighter, Bash and his eighty-strong team have had their work cut out for them. 'We've had two weeks for preparation for this five-day shoot,' Bash offers as the 'living forest' is being dismantled between breaks, 'during which we've had to construct prosthetic heads for the likes of Baraka, Reptile and Khan, and cast and costume the individual fighters.'

For the ad, the team preferred to convey the 'feel' of MK2 as opposed to using game shots. As such, the ad is a mixture of shots with six characters — Kitana, Sub-Zero, Reptile, Scorpion, Baraka and Shao Khan — making their way to the arena for the fight ahead. During this time, we see Kitana performing impressive flying kicks to the camera, Scorpion somersaulting through the forest and revealing his opaque eyes, and are introduced to Khan in all his impressive glory. Similarly, Baraka is shown within a flooded corridor, whilst Sub-Zero does what he does best and ices up the camera. What you won't see, however, is Kitana landing flat on her backside mid-kick, Reptile body-popping in between scenes, and the look of disappointment on my face when a Ronnie Corbett lookalike introduced himself as the beefy-looking Scorpion I had been watching a few minutes earlier — ooh, the wonders of television!



FACE TO FACE WITH REPTILE

Despite such a short production time, the MK2 ad is looking very impressive indeed. For recreating the mutant characters, Bash enroled Bob Keen's Image Imagination (the team behind the Hellraiser films), who slotted the ad between their preproduction duties on Hellraiser 4 and an adaptation of Clive Barker's The Last Illusion from his Books Of Blood. In charge of the MK2 duties, is effects supervisor, Dave Bonneywell: "The main problem we've had with the shoot," he starts, "was the time. Within two weeks we've had to cast face masks for Sub-Zero, Reptile, Scorpion and Shao Khan, whilst putting together prosthetic arms for Baraka along with a fully animatronic head." Of these, the latter is by far the most impressive. The Baraka head is a fully movable device which is worn by the actor and is controlled via remote control to allow the effects team to open and close the mutant's mouth and pump ooze out from the sides. Similarly, the creature's eyes can be made to roll and turn which will be used for any close-up scenes.

For the casting of the characters, RDA wanted a mixture of martial arts experts and dancers so they could combine agility with fighting moves. As such, Scorpion and Kitana have been drafted from a dance agency, with the actress donning the Kitana costume fresh from Andrew Lloyd-Webber's Cats. In addition, a short stocky guy keeps prowling the studio leasing off a series of kicks and roundhouses — and will be pulling on the Sub-Zero outfit when his tuition duties to Kitana and Reptile are over. However, whereas I was expecting a relatively short day out to watch a few flying kicks performed, the actual filming is rather dull. Kitana is left to her own devices as smoke is pumped onto the metallic set or a camera realigned for a more distant view. Whilst all this is going on, and completely unlike her sprite-based counterpart, Kitana is quiet and reserved — and try as I might, I can never recall the coin-op Kitana slobbing around in jogging bottoms! What's more, just how many times does she have to walk along a ten-foot-long corridor in order for the Director to be happy? How does eleven or twelve grab you...

TAKE EIGHT...

The on-screen version of Kitana looks completely different from the petite girl pacing to and fro for the cameras, and after a while the Director seems happy and it's flying kick time. Again. But not until the cameras are repositioned and more smoke has been pumped in. Until then, we sit and watch the footage the team have completed so far. Starting with the aforementioned snake scuttling up the tombstone, several takes of Reptile emerging from the sand follow, as do more close-ups of his reptilian contact lenses. Following this, it's into the forest once more for a few more somersaults with Scorpion, and a brilliant Steadicam (mobile camera) sequence which races through the forest until it literally bumps into the imposing form of Shao Khan himself. Tracking up his muscular body, the camera then focuses on his glowing eyes. Five times. Following this, Khan then raises his arms and bellows the immortal worlds, 'Mortal Kombat', before cutting to a profile view of Scorpion. All of a sudden, the yellow-masked fighter faces the camera only to have a bundle of lit rags thrust in his face. Spitting the petrol stored in his mouth at the torch, though, gives the perfect recreation of his brilliant fire-breathing fatality move — and looks absolutely stunning when the scene is slowed down.

Three ads have been planned, running at a minute, thirty seconds and a fifteen-second teaser. However, due to the nature of the game's content, it seems unlikely that Khan and his mates will be aired before 9pm! However, from what I have seen, it is quite easily going to be far better than anything the Gold Blend couple or the people behind Magnadoodle could ever hope for. However, as I watch Kitana strut along the same platform over and over again, I'm starting to get a little bored. The 'living forest' is now lying in a pile of harmless-looking poles, and Reptile is amusing himself by contorting his body into unnatural shapes. All of a sudden, though, things get exciting. Kitana performs a stunning kick but loses her footing on the wet floor and lands smack on her backside. Everybody winces whilst hiding a few smirks, and now seems like an opportune time to go. The televised ads may not have Kitana's new bum-bounce fatality in them, but they're going to be well worth keeping an eye out for in September..

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